Stewart Committee Report on General Education

Report to the Senate of the Faculty of Arts and Science

The Council of the Faculty of Arts and Science at two meetings, one of which was a special meeting held on January 14, 1949, dealt with the matter of implementing the recommendations made in the Report of the Committee on General Education. The findings of the Council were reported to the Senate at its February meeting and, for the convenience of the members, I am summarizing the main points of that Report to the Senate.

(1) B. A. and B. Sc. Programs

Under this heading, the Committee on General Education had made three recommendations: (a) the provision of special courses for purposes of general education; (b) provision of four C division courses for B. A. students and four A & B division courses for B. Sc. students; (c) permitting able students in the final year to substitute a reading course for one of the prescribed courses.

The Council implemented recommendations (a) and (c). Recommendation (a) is implemented by the provision of two compulsory courses for B. A. students of a special type suitable for purposes of general education. The one is a course dealing with the history of biological science and its significance in modern society. The other will deal with physical science from the same point of view. So far as B. Sc. students are concerned, no new type of course in the A and B division was necessary as there are several courses now in the calendar which are suitable from the standpoint of general education. With reference to recommendation (c), the Council is experimenting with the plan of not prescribing extra reading on the assumption that the better type of students are likely to make good use of their time. The danger here, more particularly with the B. Sc. students, is that they may use the extra time merely to concentrate on examination preparation in the courses they are taking. This will need to be watched and, if necessary, a program of extra reading may have to be prescribed after all. Our pattern arrangement will probably enable the departments to find out what these better students are doing in lieu of the extra course.

With reference to recommendation (b), the Council did not see its way to make the extra course referred to mandatory, but a fifth course described as an unrestricted option make it possible for the students to register in line with this recommendation.

(2) B. A. and B. Sc. Honors Programs

Under this heading, the Report recommended that the required courses outside the division of concentration be not less than in the pattern program for the same department.

The Committee on Honors made two recommendations to the Council which were approved; first, that Honors programs should be and can be controlled by the departments to make sure that they are not unduly narrow and second, for purposes

purposes of the Honors degree, the really important distinction is that between A and B division courses on the one hand and C division on the other. A student taking Honors in an A division subject, English for example, may achieve variety and breadth by taking another A division subject such as French. In the case of the B. Sc. Honors student, it was decided to have the A or B division subjects selected from the special group listed for the ordinary B. Sc. students as these courses are suitable for purposes of general education.

(3) Professional Schools and the Combined Courses

The Report of the Committee does not make specific recommendations under this heading for the reason that, on the whole, provision is now being made in these courses and Schools for general education.

(4) General Reading

The Committee recommends that departments and instructors should experiment with methods of stimulating general reading and report on methods they have found successful.

The Council of the Faculty of Arts and Science endorses this suggestion and points out that, in some courses, instructors have already been doing this without, however, reporting on it. This has been done mostly in connection with Honors students, but it is now suggested that the practice be extended to the general course students. The Council will await with interest reports from departments with respect to this practice. The Council, moreover, wishes to go on record as approving the recommendation of the Committee concerning the practice of inviting outside lecturers whenever possible to the University.

May 3, 1949

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Dean

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

President's Office

February 14, 1949

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Arts and Science Office

To All Deans

Dear Sirs:

The Senate of the University at its meeting February 11 accepted the Stewart committee report on General Education and requested that each faculty council should submit to the Senate at its May meeting of this year a report on its progress in implementing the recommendations contained in that report. If no action along this line has been taken or is contemplated, the Senate requests that full reasons should be given.

During the discussion of the report at the Senate meeting there was considerable support, especially from members of the Senate who are graduates of this University, for the suggestion that room could be made for more general education by discarding much unnecessary detail contained in courses now carried in the curriculum. This applies particularly of course to the professional faculties. It was felt that much time is spent on many techniques which soon become out of date and that it would be more profitable to concentrate on the presentation of principles, with just enough detail to illustrate them.

It is expected that the next meeting of the Senate will be held on Thursday, May 19. Your reports should be in the hands of the Registrar certainly not later than the end of April, in order that he may have time to replicate and distribute them to the Senate well in advance of the meeting.

Yours very truly,

R-N

President

RN/ES

Copy to Registrar